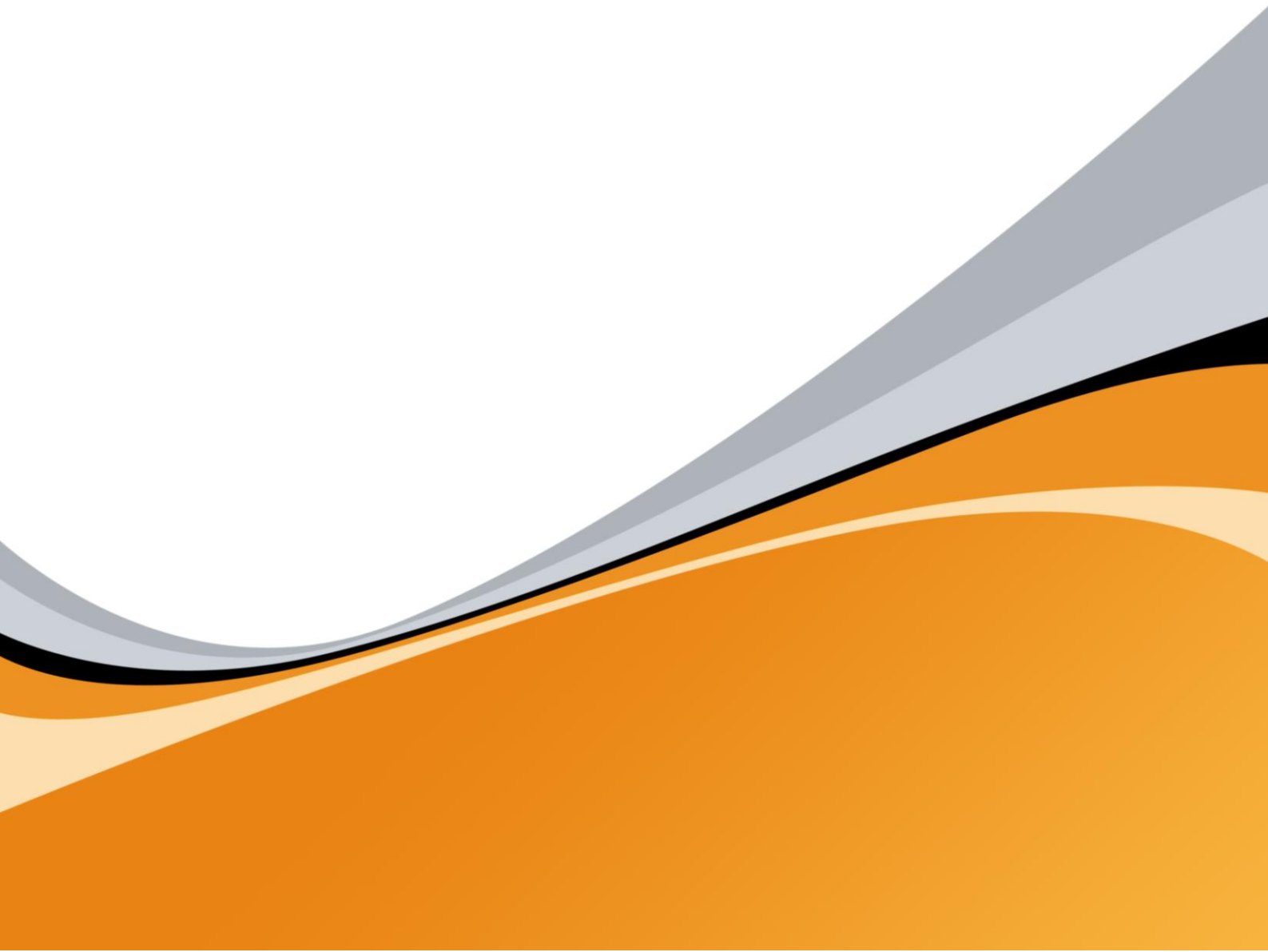




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## **Unlearning Patriarchy: Gender Training by PRIA**



The Government of India launched its first National Adult Education Programme in 1978, linking learning of literacy with awareness of entitlements. While building capacity of literacy instructors, and later in mid 1980s of State Resource Centres (like Deepayatan in Bihar), it became clear to PRIA that individual focus on hitherto ignored women does not 'motivate' them to learn. They need a collective space and process for changing themselves.

PRIA's pioneering Participatory Training Methodology (PTM) is focused on use of learning to bring about change. This methodology springs from the principle that all individuals have the capacity to learn from and reflect on their experiences and learn new practices that stimulate actions through the realization of their own power to influence change. Everyday experiences and knowledge of residents of a community (specifically the marginalised) living in a village, town, city, or working in an organisation, play a significant role in designing the training strategy and methods. Our [Manual on Participatory Training Methodology](#), launched in 1986, soon included a specific focus on an [experiential understanding of gender in everyday life](#).

PRIA has demonstrated how women's agency for personal and social change can be facilitated through participatory training methodologies. The use of this gender training methodology, developed after the launch in India of the first separately designed national public programme for women's development (DWCRA under IRDP in the mid 1980s), has provided practical support to government officials, development workers, activists, and community members for the past four decades to understand gender and unlearn patriarchy.

### **Training For and With Rural Women**

In the 1980s, Oxfam America's programme in India and Bangladesh supported projects that focused on strengthening women's economic security and on increasing their social and political power. In 1986, a workshop was facilitated by PRIA which reviewed the progress and impact of the women focused programme to identify future directions to strengthen women's work in the informal sector in different regions. The outcomes paid attention to facilitating women's learning environment, trainer's behaviour and choice of context-appropriate methods.

Participatory training sessions with grassroots rural women started in 1989. Using participatory methodology, women's groups learnt to make decisions around the issues that emerged in the group discussions. Apart from direct training of rural women, field facilitators from other non-governmental organisations were also trained on the use of the methodology. The inter-linked processes of organising and learning with women were introduced in participatory community monitoring and evaluation at local levels.

By the 1990s, it became clear that participatory learning is useful in removing barriers between literate and illiterate, middle-class and working class, professional and amateur groups. The question emerged: how to challenge the hegemonic control of elites over development systems and programmes at local levels to include the point of view of ordinary women citizens. As economic roles of women were largely

overlooked in government programmes and policies, PRIA created capacity-building initiatives to strengthen abilities of ordinary, semi-literate women to increase their livelihood options, which are often constrained by lack of literacy skills. In 1999, the Women's Empowerment through Literacy and Livelihood (WELLD) programme addressed women's issues, gender roles and the value of independent savings and credit groups.

### **Gender Training for Effective Governance**

After the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the Constitution, there was difficulty in inducting women into the political arena at the local level in the face of male-dominated political climate and the threat of violence to women who decided to step into political leadership roles. From the early 2000s, PRIA scaled up its Women's Political Empowerment and Leadership (WPE&L) programme to build women cadres at the local levels through sensitization trainings. In 22 states, strong and capable women elected leaders emerged, capacitated to bring issues like alcohol abuse and domestic violence on the agenda of their political campaigns. This was their chance to represent ground realities and start a larger level of social change within communities to consistently challenge patriarchal norms.

Establishing links between women's leadership education and community empowerment requires sensitisation of government officials and frontline workers on issues of violence against women, sexual harassment at workplace, etc. Gender training for frontline health workers, Social Justice Committee members, and elected representatives result in strong grassroots local action to put gender on the table. Recently, training of anganwadi workers in Delhi on the issue of sexual harassment helped enable strong redressal mechanisms and functioning of Local Committees under the SHW Act, 2013 for informal sector women workers, especially women domestic workers. The model was presented to and adopted by the South West district administration in Delhi.

### **Training for Mainstreaming Gender in Institutions and Development Programmes**

Gender mainstreaming in civil society organizations and governance institutions has been a focus of PRIA's gender training programme since 1998. The training, based on organizational learning approaches, focuses on formulating gender sensitive mission and vision, setting up and training committees to address sexual harassment, developing gender sensitive HR policies, etc.

Capacities to undertake gender audits and gender budgeting for development programmes have been built with panchayat level officials in Odisha, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Apart from incorporating gender-equality as a goal of development, PRIA's gender audits include conducting exercises to document gender fair practices, which in turn put gender on the agenda at an institutional level. One of the goals of the training is to institutionalise annual gender audits in development programmes and in formal organisations (government, non-government and private sector). The audit is also crafted to influence policies

towards creating an enabling environment for women elected representatives in governance institutions.

### **Gender Training for Boys and Men**

PRIA's approach to changing gender relations and ending violence against women includes building capacities in boys and men to question (#AisaKyun) – their own attitudes, and those in families and communities that condone patriarchal behaviours and structures. Such capacity to question is also raised among girls and women, because many forms of gender discrimination, violence and harassment are so frequent and so internalised as ordinary, that girls themselves fail to challenge or question them.

The Kadam Badhate Chalo program specifically works with adolescent boys and girls. The trainings sensitize adolescents about differences between gender and sex, and gender roles, helping them identify the root causes for violence against women and girls focused on understanding socialization and the systemic nature of patriarchy. The methodology particularly recognizes that young boys and young girls working together are the important change agents in creating a more democratic and safe environment for women and girls. The use of drama, poetry and song as well as sports stimulates learning among peers. The youth also learn participatory safety assessment techniques which they use extensively to identify safe and unsafe spaces within their community, college, university or high school. In the past couple of years, gender trainings with adolescents have begun to include conversations on multiple gender identities, going beyond the traditional gender binary.

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